

Making Sense of Mackerel

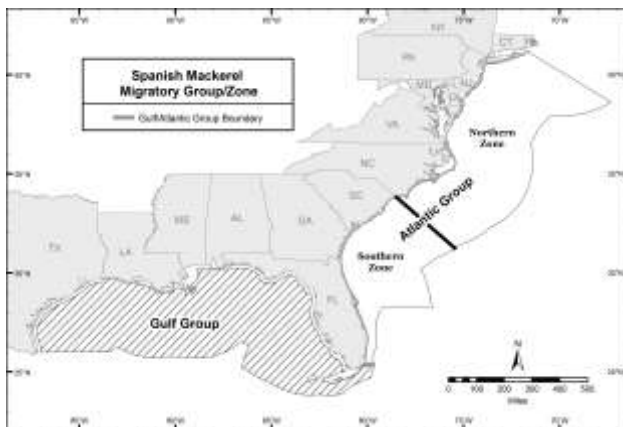
The Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils regulate Spanish and king mackerel through the joint Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fisheries Management Plan (FMP). Two migratory groups, Gulf and Atlantic, are recognized for each species and regulated separately. The area of the Gulf migratory group extends from the southern border of Texas throughout the Gulf to the Miami-Dade/Monroe county border on the east coast of Florida. The area of the Atlantic migratory group extends from the Miami-Dade/Monroe county border on the east coast of Florida to the intersection of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. These fish travel long distances and may move between the two water bodies. In general, mackerel live farther north in the summer and farther south in the winter.



Commercial Spanish mackerel

The fishing year for the Gulf migratory group is April 1 through March 31, and there are no trip limits. For current information on Gulf of Mexico Spanish mackerel commercial annual quotas, please visit http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/acl_monitoring/commercial_gulf/index.html

The Atlantic migratory group fishing year is March 1 through the end of February. The area for this group is divided into Northern and Southern Zones.



The fishing year begins March 1 with a trip limit of 3,500 pounds in both zones. In the Northern Zone, which extends from New York to the North Carolina/South Carolina state line, the trip limit is 3,500 pounds year-round. In the Southern Zone, which extends from the North Carolina/South Carolina state line to the Dade/Monroe Florida county line, the trip limit begins at 3,500 pounds. After 75% of the Southern Zone adjusted quota

(total quota minus 250,000 lbs) is met or projected to be met, the trip limit is reduced to 1,500 pounds. When 100% of the Southern Zone adjusted quota is met or projected to be met, the trip limit is reduced to 500 pounds until the end of the fishing year or until the Southern Zone total commercial quota is met or projected to be met, at which time the commercial sector in the Southern Zone would be closed to harvest of Spanish mackerel.

For current information on South Atlantic Spanish mackerel commercial annual quotas, please visit http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/acl_monitoring/commercial_sa/index.html

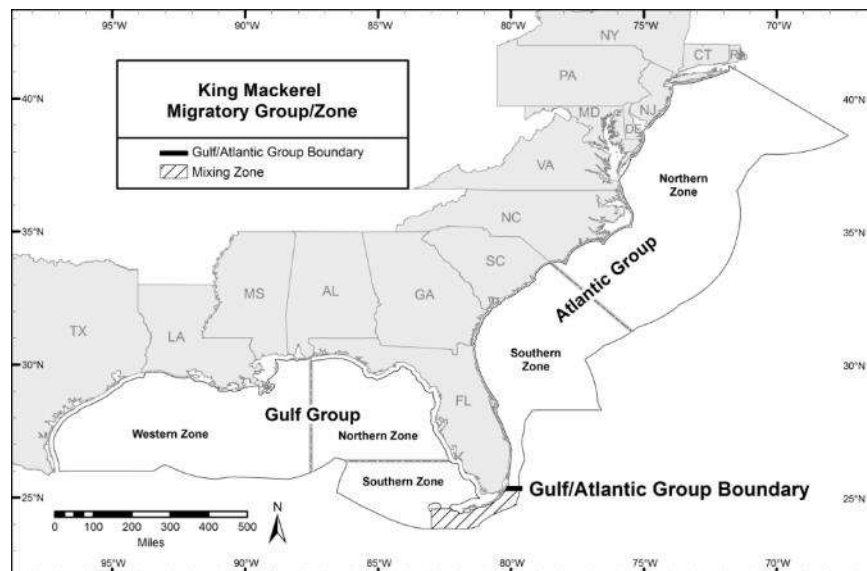
Recreational Spanish mackerel

Both the Gulf and Atlantic migratory groups have a 15 fish per person bag limit year-round. State and federal bag limits cannot be combined.

Commercial King mackerel

The Gulf migratory group of king mackerel is divided into Western, Northern, and Southern Zones. The Western Zone extends from the southern border of Texas to the Alabama/Florida state line. The fishing year is July 1 through June 30 with a trip limit of 3,000 pounds. The Northern Zone extends from the Alabama/Florida border to the Collier/Lee Florida county line. The fishing year is October 1 through September 30 with a trip limit of 1,250 pounds. The Southern Zone extends from the Collier/Lee county line to the Monroe/Dade county line. The Southern Zone is split into hook-and-line and gillnet components. The fishing year for the hook-and-line component is July 1 through June 30 with a trip limit of 1,250 pounds. The fishing year for the gillnet component is the Tuesday after the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday through June 30 with a trip limit of 45,000 pounds. While the fishing year ends June 30 for the gillnet fishery, the quota is usually reached in less than two weeks.

For current information on Gulf of Mexico King mackerel commercial annual quotas, please visit http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/acl_monitoring/commercial_gulf/index.html



The Atlantic migratory group has a fishing year of March 1 through end of February. This migratory group is divided into Northern and Southern Zones. The Southern Zone is further subdivided by area, and season.



The Northern Zone extends from New York to the North Carolina/South Carolina state line. The trip limit is 3,500 pounds year-round. The Southern Zone extends from the North

Carolina/South Carolina state line to the Dade/Monroe Florida county line. The Southern Zone is subdivided from the North Carolina/South Carolina state line to the Flagler/Volusia Florida county line and then from the Flagler/Volusia to the Dade/Monroe county line. From the North Carolina/South Carolina state line to the Flagler/Volusia county line, the trip limit is 3,500 pounds year-round. From the Flagler/Volusia to Dade/Monroe during March 1 through March 31, the trip limit is 50 fish. From April 1 through September 30, this increases to 75 fish. From October 1 through January 31, the trip limit returns to 50 fish. If by January 31 less than 70% of the quota has been landed, from February 1 through the end of February the trip limit increases to 75 fish. The quota for the Southern Zone is divided into two seasons: Season 1 is March 1 through September 30 and Season 2 is October 1 through the end of February.

For current information on South Atlantic commercial annual quotas, please visit http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/acl_monitoring/commercial_sa/index.html

Recreational King mackerel

The entire Gulf group has a 3 fish per person bag limit year-round. In the Atlantic group from New York through Georgia there is a 3 fish per person bag limit year-round. In the Atlantic group off Florida, there is a 2 fish per person bag limit year-round. State and federal bag limits cannot be combined.



Migratory patterns of king mackerel

Researchers have some idea about the movements of king mackerel in the Gulf and Atlantic through tagging and genetic studies. In the

Gulf, king mackerel are believed to spend summer in the northern Gulf, in waters near the mouth of the Mississippi. In fall, they migrate south in two separate groups; one group migrates east and south along the Florida coast, and the other group migrates west and south along the Texas coast. The eastern group spends the winter in south Florida. The western group moves to waters off southern Texas, and some portion may move into Mexican waters off the Yucatan peninsula. Unfortunately, little data are available from this area. In the spring both groups migrate back north to their spawning grounds. In the Atlantic, king mackerel show a similar migratory pattern but only one group exists. This group spends summers in the northern part of the Atlantic and winters in the southern part of the Atlantic. Thus in winter, Gulf group and Atlantic group king mackerel co-occur in waters off Florida.

Currently, this winter mixing zone is considered to primarily include waters off of the Florida Keys and is managed by the Gulf Council year round.